

132 Dega - more than 8,000 feet above sea level; cold, with
137 average temperatures of 50° - 61° F. The dega
241 is primarily prairie grassland, strewn with many
medium-sized wooded areas of the high mountain
type. The area is particularly adapted for rais-
ing livestock, but also suitable for growing
barley, wheat, tieff (a variety of millet), beans
flax, and temperate fruit, which are gathered
wild not long after the end of the rains. Trees
include the wild olive (*Olea chrysophylla*), juni-
per (*Juniperus procera*), the medicinal Kosso tree
(*Hegenia abyssinica*).

Woyna Dega - between 6,000 and 8,000 feet: temperate to
warm, with average temperatures of 61° - 68° F.
This climatic zone includes the greater part of
the plateau country, and most of the populated
and cultivated lands. This is the zone where
most cereals are grown, including soft grains,
barley, tieff, maize. Here coffee grows wild.
Forests, where they occur, are thicker, but spiny
bushes are more prevalent. At the lower levels
there are thick stands of bamboo (*Podocarpus*) and
East African hardwoods; at the higher levels are
juniper varieties. Most Amhara live in this zone.

132 Qolla - below 5,000 feet: hot, with average temperatures
137 in the 70's, 80's and 90's F. The qolla includes
the arid lowland zones, as well as tropical for-
est; river valleys like that of the Awash; and
most border areas of the country.

on other side of the same hill.

361 Four factors seem to determine where a hamlet is likely to be formed: (1) Ecological considerations (water within a woman's walking distance; pasturage for the flock); (2) kinship consideration - for all persons within a hamlet are nearly always closely related and form a family community; (3) administrative considerations - inherited family ownership of land, or tenancy on land of feudal lord or in a fief of the church, when an agreement for settlement can be negotiated. This latter type is often found among the older hamlets, placed where some historical or legendary event occurred (e.g. a miracle recognized by the local Coptic church; or a military event). When a new church is built in an untenanted area, there are usually several extended families needing land, who negotiate a sharecropping agreement with the chief priest of the local church. (4) Ethnic consideration. Because of the individualism of each residential family group, two hamlets are rarely close to one another. Since they are built on or near hilltops to avoid flooding in the rainy season, there is usually a valley in between where brooks or irrigation canals form borderlines for planted fields. The hillsides, if they are not terrace-farmed, provide common pasturage for all hamlets on the hill. Not only sheep and goats, but even cows are quite used to climbing over fairly steep bushy hillsides to feed. Carrying water is a woman's job; but a hamlet may be located several hours' climb from the nearest all-year water supply. Wind protection, i.e. location of the hamlet in a spot below the top of the hill, for fear of

- 361 tornadoes in the rainy season, is another ecological consideration.

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The hamlet is always a kinship unit, usually patrilineal and patrilineal. When a young man marries, his father will give him a cow or two, as he will to his daughter. But only the son will receive the use of part of his father's rented (or owned) fields to support his new family. Thus he will usually build his hut near his father's, father's brother's, and paternal grandfather's. In exceptional cases, when no land is available at his father's, the bridegroom may agree to establish himself at his wife's hamlet, but this is rare since the feeling is that he will always remain a subjugated, barely tolerated, henpecked and ill-treated figure. A proud Amhara male, even a "gabbar" (peasant ex-serf), would not agree to such a condition and insists on patriarchal status at least within his own biological family of creation. He would much rather continue

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to obey his father than his new father-in-law. Consanguinal kinship feelings are so strong that it is a common assumption that no in-law could really mean well and be unselfishly well-disposed to the newcomer. Only when warfare has killed off the adult males in a hamlet, male inlaws move in.

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Each hut is inhabited by a biological family, usually father and mother, about three children who have survived infant mortality, and perhaps an aged parent or old, widowed kinswoman of the husband's.

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Patrilineal kinship relations are often related also to administrative considerations. On church-owned land, the peasants who live on the hillside below the church, who

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This change has also lightened the burden on the "gab-bar", the tenant sharecropper. In the past it was the gab-bar who had to supply the "feast" (called "gebber", with ironic truthfulness regarding the provider) for feudal troops on march, in addition to all his other burdens. The cheqa shum was responsible for its collection, for only he knew how much produce, goats, sheep, honey, etc., the peasant had left after the heavy sharecropping rent to the landlord and the "tithe" ("asrat") which is still payable to the central government (formerly to the district feudal lord).

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There is now a new tax, the "education tax" payable even in rural areas where no government schools exist as yet, and payable in cash only, not in produce as in case of "asrat". This tax, too, is collected by the cheqa shum and delivered to the mislane who must now issue a receipt and forward the money to the central treasury.

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Ethnic considerations in the location of a hamlet in Amhara territory apply to hamlets of scattered Falashas, ironsmiths who observe Mosaic Judaism, and hamlets of the Fagi, Cushitic-speaking tanners who were "Fagan" but have recently accepted the Coptic faith and the Amharic language. Since their services are required, they are often permitted to rent land on a hill, the other side of which may contain a Coptic Amhara hamlet. Relations between these hamlets, beginning on strictly economic terms, often become as friendly as the difference between religions, low status of skilled smiths and tanners, and old supernatural [622] suspicions permit. In case of such residence, one cheqa shum may have an ethnic variety of hamlets under his domain, and may know far more about their "strange" inhabitants and their customs than the average Amhara.

342 ded and especially unsanitary. But during most of the year nearly all activities during the 12 to 13 hours of daylight are carried on outside. After each rainy season the roof and walls are inspected for damage from heavy rain, hail and tornadoes, and, with repairs, a good tuqul can last twenty years.

The hut-building season begins usually a few months after the rainy season is over, in the month of Hedar, after the major harvest of cereals has been gathered and threshed. A tuqul is usually built in stages, interrupted by other chores. Since there is no danger of rain, the beams, saplings, withes, thatch grass can be selected from forest and bush at leisure, and left on the spot selected. But when a marriage approaches, especially during the main "marriage season", the entire process can be speeded up to little over a week; and if there are not enough hands in one hamlet, other kinsmen and friends can be invited to the hut-building-party; the host supplying daily spiced meat stew, barley beer, etc., thus attracting as many as twenty men.

• [361] The first step is to select a location that will blend into the landscape and thus be best protected from wind, driving rain, tornado twisters. Cypressess, which always surround a church on the hilltop, are utilized as partial windbreaks for tuquls of a hamlet just below.

The circular ground floor for the hut, usually about 20 feet in, is measured off by means of a central stick and a rope. The stick indicates where the central, roof-supporting post will be, and the circle indicates the walls. Both the selection of location and the measuring of the ground is done by a semi-specialist, an Amhara who acts

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463 They are especially afraid of the "buda", evil eye concept,
754 of which Falashas are believed especially capable; also of
326 their supposed ability to turn themselves into real and
magic hyenas at night.

[323] This magic power, however, is believed to make their
tools "strong", and the pottery of the Falasha womenfolk
"hard to break", so that their wares are preferred by the
Amhara, creating a monopoly for Falasha iron tools and
pottery wherever Falasha hamlets are within a day's walking
distance. In some areas there are itinerant Falasha smiths,
whose womenfolk make pottery at the same time. They will
live in a special guest hut at the edge of an Amhara hamlet.

463 Weaving is also done by Falashas, but they have no
563 monopoly on it, as Muslim Ethiopian weavers are believed
286 by the Amhara to turn out togas that are just as good.

For many centuries Muslims were permitted to reside only
in segregated sections of towns, such as "AddiaAlam" of
Gondar town. Though this prohibition has been lifted,

• [361] most Ethiopian Muslims still reside in special quarters
of towns, rarely in a rural hamlet on the Amhara plateau.
They were not permitted to own land and no one would rent
them any.

They see much more of the country trade routes, since
it is they who do much of caravan trading, acting as guides,
quartermasters and retail traders for Arab coreligionists
who are the wholesalers, usually on routes leading to the
Sudan, to Eritrea and to Somaliland. The Coptic Amhara
consider the Ethiopian Muslims almost as foreign as the
Arabs, even the descendants of Amhara who were forcefully

606 to be a "good wife", to do "everything right", to learn what her husband likes. If she does not obey her mother-in-law, she is criticized as "rude", and the women say that the groom will "divorce her soon".

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596 After the marriage, and especially after she bears children, a wife is regarded as a charter member of her husband's "byēt" (lit. house), his family of procreation, continuing his patrilineal kinship unit, regardless of whether they move to residence elsewhere or not. Nevertheless, it is the "byēt" that is the landholding unit among most "rest"-owning Amhara, and each biological unit within it receives an allocation of land for usufruct; the limit of one able-bodied plowman is regarded as 5-10 "qada". Thus, the biological family of procreation does not own land, nor does it control it, until, with the death of elders and advancing age, it becomes the "family of orientation" to which a succeeding generation must give obedience.

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422 Meanwhile, however, the biological family unit does own the cattle and other mobile goods with which they started their married life, and the increase therefrom. This gives them some partial economic independence.

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361 When, due to war, epidemics (e.g. malaria), or famine (erosion), a "byēt" decides to abandon, for the time being, the ancestral lands, and migrates to another district, it usually huddles together in one or a minimum of residential hamlets, sometimes for several generations, until times are better. Then it buds off so rapidly that soon only a few huts remain on the location of the original hamlet of refuge. Thereupon kinsmen may claim "betāna" rights of usufruct from more distant kinfolk who had remained be-

423 hind on the ancestral lands.

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This succession of events has taken place so often in Amhara history, that very few old settlements have remained on the same

[591] spot for even a century. As a result, many regional varieties of "patrilocal residence" have developed, and even "matrilocal residence" is not excluded, though most bridegrooms would shun such a fate. Also, the land tenure of the Amhara has become complex and replete with litigation, because of the amorphous definition of "byet", which sometimes emphasizes the consanguineal aspect, sometimes the residential, of kinship after marriage.

B. Problems of the Married Couple and Divorce.

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When a couple has remained married for a number of years, people say they are "rässa" (lit. coagulated), stuck on each other. For divorce of a first marriage is common as the partners mature.

If her husband neglects her, wanders off, is a drunkard, or beats her too often, a woman may decide to initiate divorce proceedings. A man may do so if she is disobedient, e.g. wanders off to town without his permission.

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If a man takes a "daro" wife in addition to his "semanya" wife, the latter has no recourse in court. But if he takes another "semanya" wife, she can have him arrested, if she can locate him, for breaking his oath. She then angrily accuses him of doing a stupid thing, "you married one ex hump (shanna) above the other". He may be fined, but his first marriage may still remain valid. If a "semanya" wife hears that her husband has a previous wife, she often laughs, flattered, mocking the other woman by saying: "I married on top of her and not below" - for evidently, the man,

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[112] patients to her when his organic medicines had not helped. It was this guide who hit on the idea of flattering Lady Salāntew by notifying her that the foreigner was sick, suffering from severe headaches, sleeplessness and chronic intestinal cramps - (all common ailments in her practice), and that he would trust only her for treatment. Whether or not Lady Salantew believed this, it indicated to her that the foreigner would fit himself into the framework and procedures of her zar cult, and not become a disturbing element that might "offend" her zar spirits.

The guide had taken the further precaution of negotiating with her through her brothers, who were willing to encourage her to accept, in the hope of gifts and rewards. As a result, Lady Salantew accepted in principle; but in line with the unhurried dignity of her position she had the foreigner informed that he should send the guide again at a later time when she would make known the conditions under which he might attend the "amat bal" convention. In appreciation for having reached this point in the negotiation, the guide left her brothers with some "etan gänzäb" (money for frankincense).

The next step was reached when Lady Salantu expressed the wish to have the foreigner appear before her, some days before the convention, so that she could look him over.

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[342] Her house, a semimodern affair of hard-mud walls, is reached by a steep downhill trail from the Gondar town market. On the lower level (the old section of Gondar called "Addis Alam") many houses and huts are built on the foundations of stone houses destroyed by the dervishes in the late 19th century. This section, once restricted to Muslim and other non-Coptic minorities, is now largely inhabited by Muslim Ethiopian weavers and retail traders, many ex-slaves of Sudanese or part-Shanqalla

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361 descent, and a few poor Amhara Coptic families, as well as some Amhara who do business there, such as the "wogasha" doctor. Various elements which do not wish to be under too close scrutiny by the church or the police prefer to live in this section. Here the "zar" societies can pound their drums as loudly as the cult requires, for only muffled sounds will rise to the Coptic part of the town.

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123 After stooping to pass through the somewhat low entrance to the house of Lady Salāntew, the visitor finds himself in a room larger than he had anticipated. He is told to remove his shoes, (as if this were a church or mosque). The room is lit by numerous little clay oil lamps even in daytime - a considerable luxury, - for windows have been carefully avoided or boarded up to assure privacy. On the mud-benches around the wall sit a number of women; others sit on mats on the hard-mud floor. An Amhara male visitor in European type suit, who has just consulted the Lady Salāntu, leaves hurriedly. Lady Salāntu is seated on a raised platform at the far end of the room, behind a curtain, and another area in front of her stage is marked off by a long, thin wooden beam embedded in the floor. The women devotees in the room are busily spinning cotton with their little distaffs, and, since it is still afternoon and not yet "zar time", whisper and gossip with each other freely. Some take time out to suckle their babies, often without rising.

Someone has gone behind the curtain and whispered to her that the foreigner and his guide have arrived. She promptly pulls the curtain aside, but pretends to pay no special attention to the visitor. Her active zars have not possessed her at this time, and she therefore appears absent-minded. She sits on a slightly raised seat on the small

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ETHIOPIAN HIGHLANDS

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114 THIS lecture does not pretend to be a serious study of any geographical aspect of Ethiopia. It is rather a record of impressions gained during a year spent in Ethiopia in various jobs ranging from the care of a park of derelict mules to that of Intelligence Officer to the newly formed Ethiopian Army.

Unluckily I was posted away from Addis Ababa at short notice, and my reference books in Italian and Italian photographs of ethnological interest which I had collected should now be in Nairobi, if they have not been lost. Many of the photographs used as illustrations were taken in the field by Captain Mark Pilkington, the Life Guards, a very gallant officer who distinguished himself in the guerrilla fighting round Lake Tana and who was killed in action in Libya, just two months ago.

133 With the possible exception of parts of the Shankalla wilderness, which is the Abyssinian extension of the Sudan plain between the western bend of the Blue Nile and the Escarpment, it cannot be said that any large areas of the Ethiopian Empire had remained unvisited by Europeans prior to the Italian War of 1935-36 and the campaign of 1941. I have however come across no account of the remarkable massifs of Dungwur and Belaia which rise out of the Shankalla plain to the east of the Escarpment. On the tableland of Belaia, well within the nominal Italian frontier, an advance base for the supply of the Patriot forces was established in January 1941 and in February the Emperor set up his headquarters there.

137 These twin mountain masses rise out of the Shankalla plain to an altitude of about 7000 feet above sea-level. They are covered with rich forests and watered by fast-running streams. Dungwur was uninhabited and visited only from time to time by stray bands of Abyssinian hunters. But there are flourishing villages and ancient churches on Belaia. It was a weird experience to reach these strange islands of luxuriating nature after the long camel trek across the burnt-out Shankalla wilderness. From a day's march away we

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grade from the Eritrean plateau. All civilization in Ethiopia has penetrated from north to south along the great dorsal ridge of the Eastern Escarpment, where the so-called Strada Imperiale now runs from Asmara to Addis Ababa. 133 177 [497]

Along this line have been concentrated the successive Ethiopian capitals with the exception of Gondar, which was chosen far to the north-west as a refuge from the ruinous wars with the Moslems and the Gallas. And along this line, due south from Aksum and Aduwa, were the great centres of the Copto-Ethiopian culture of the Middle Ages, places like Lalibala and the monasteries on lake Haik and the traditional centre of the Coptic Church at Debra Libanos. 361 ●

From this dorsal ridge of the Eastern Escarpment Ethiopian culture, and it was a very real culture in its heyday, spread westward into Gojjam and southward to the region of the lakes. Luca di Sabelli in his recent 'Storia di Abissinia' has shown that Coptic-Ethiopian missionaries were active as far south as Madagascar and the Mozambique coast. 177 [797]

Ethiopian Coptic culture drew its nurture from the powerful Coptic Church in Cairo, from the Crusading civilization in Palestine, and from the Byzantine Empire. Just as the establishment of the Turks at the exit from the Black Sea brought about the decline of the East Christian cultures in the Caucasus and the Balkans, so the Turkish control of the Nile valley and the Red Sea slowly strangled the Coptic Ethiopian culture of East Africa. The Ethiopian rulers, pressed by the invasions of Muhammad Gran, were well aware of their mortal danger and it is a curious fact that kings in Georgia and Ethiopia appealed to the rising power of Spain in the Western Mediterranean at about the same time. The Portuguese episode in Ethiopia was a delayed response to the appeal made to the Catholic powers. 175

The extraordinary tenacity of the Ethiopians to the western tradition is a remarkable characteristic of their historical development. The Aksumite kingdom, for all its Semitic appearance, was essentially a projection of Hellenism, and the Aksumite kings remained the traditional allies of the Byzantine Emperors in their struggle with the Persian Sasanids for the control of the Red Sea—an episode which was parallel in time with the conflict between these same two "world powers" for mastery of the Black Sea. The Coptic Church and Christian civilization in East Africa proved more enduring than the once powerful Nestorian Church in Asia, with which it may in some ways be compared. The later Ethiopian Kingdom played the same role in the struggle between Turks and Portuguese for control of the Red Sea and for the trade of the Indian Ocean as the Aksumites had a thousand years earlier in the rivalry between Byzantines and Persians. But they showed the same persistent antagonism to the Roman Church as the East Christians had displayed towards the Crusaders and the Papacy. In the end the Ethiopians expelled the Portuguese from Abyssinia and managed to maintain their own independence against their Moslem neighbours, until in the last decade it was suppressed by a professedly Christian power.

The Ethiopians are a remarkable phenomenon in the East African world and with their tenacity and their undoubted natural intelligence they are destined to have no little influence on the future course of history in that area.

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tunity for geographical observation. The vegetation was really fantastic. Along the higher slopes of Choké giant red-hot pokers stretched for miles. Rather lower the ground was carpeted with violets and beautiful mosses. There were bushes of heather growing higher than the height of a man, and a variety of lichens. In the silence of the mountains in the early morning mists, the atmosphere strangely recalled parts of Ireland or the North Cornish coast. It was a fitting background for the magical beliefs and the immaterial psyche of the Ethiopians, which the more matter-of-fact European finds difficult to comprehend. [187]

It was interesting to note that at about 11,000 feet there appeared to be a sort of fly-line. The flies, which are a constant pest round Debra Markos at 9000 feet, entirely disappeared and only appeared again on the incline down to Mota and the Blue Nile. [136]

There were only two or three villages along the track, which of course is a new one, but collections of huts were fairly frequent over the lower slopes, particularly on the incline to the Blue Nile. Cultivation was maintained up to about 12,000 feet. I gather from a book on the Heights of Simen (to the north-east of the Gondar area) that there is a flourishing farming life at the same altitudes in that region. Grazing was magnificent and live stock were notably well conditioned by comparison with the animals of the Debra Markos district. [361] [241] [251]

Colonel Boustead's force continued from Mota to Bahrdar at the southern tip of Lake Tana, where they made contact with the small mixed group of Abyssinians, Sudanese, and British under Major Simmonds. The march was continued in the direction of Debra Tabor, the former capital of Ras Gugsa Wolye, which the Italians had made into a major defended locality—the base for a line of dependent forts strung out along the road which linked Dessie on the Strada Imperiale with Gondar. Conditions remained difficult at an altitude of over 9000 feet in the first weeks of the so-called Little Rains which break in May. [175] [132]

Meanwhile a force of one company of Sudanese and one company of a newly formed Ethiopian battalion with a few British officers and N.C.Os. under Colonel Wingate, O/C Gojjam Force, was following the retreating garrison of Debra Markos. About eight thousand of these had survived the operations in Gojjam and they had retired across the Blue Nile, blowing up the Shafartak bridge, and were making for Magdala and Debra Tabor across the mountains which lie to the east of the Blue Nile and to the north of the main road from Debra Markos to Addis Ababa. Harassing operations were kept up throughout the month of May and, when two thousand of Ras Kassa's Shoans joined in, Colonel Wingate was strong enough to bring the enemy to a general action. The affair was decided when Bimbashi Thesiger, by a remarkable 50-mile march in twenty-four hours over hostile country, seized a panhandle connecting two plateaux along which the Italians were intending to retreat. As a result the remnants of the fifty-one enemy battalions stationed in the Gojjam surrendered at Agibar, about four months after the Emperor had set up his original headquarters at Belaia.

All this country on the marches of the ancient kingdoms of Shoa and Amhara was relatively little known before the Italian occupation. I refer to [137]

See, in the Choké Mountains. - ANALYST

Between Debra Markos and Mota. ANALYST

[133] the triangle of mountains bounded on the north by the Dessie-Debra Tabor road; on the west by the canyon of the Blue Nile; on the east by the Strada Imperiale; and on the south by the Debra Markos-Addis Ababa road. Here [491] Ras Kassa's Shoan fief of Salale adjoins his territories in Amhara Saint. [132] Salale is a great grassy upland, in May already swept by rain storms for six or eight hours a day. The road to Addis Ababa passes through Ras Kassa's capital of Fiche, which has the usual character of Abyssinian country towns: [361] an agglomeration of huts standing in rather dreary eucalyptus groves and [231] dominated by a fort and the European villa of the Ras. Salale has the reputation of being the best horse-raising country in Abyssinia.

[175] Fiche has a certain strategic importance in the feudal politics of Abyssinia since it lies across the main line of communication between the capital and Gojjam; and in the period of *coup d'états* in the '20s the lord of Salale was always in the position to intervene suddenly in the capital only 70 miles away.

Ras Kassa has always maintained his loyalty to the Makonnen house. He is a magnificent old veteran of war and politics, rugged and erect in spite of his advanced years. Ras Kassa's two elder sons, who had come in to discuss a truce with the Italians some months after the fall of Addis Ababa in 1936, were executed under circumstances of abominable treachery. Nevertheless the old Ras made himself responsible for the escort of the Agibar prisoners over about 150 miles of country without a single one of them coming to any harm.

I was fortunate in June and July in spending some time in Dessie and in making my way up to the Debra Tabor district where, in mid-July, the Italian garrison of some six thousand men surrendered. Dessie, which means [103] "my joy" in Amharic, is an ideal base from which to study the incomparably beautiful country round. The former capital of Ras Michael, the Moslem [632] father of the ex-Emperor Lij Iyasu, Dessie became the northern military headquarters of the Empire during the years preceding the Italian conquest. Dessie was favourably situated in relation to the Italian frontier in southern Eritrea, but it owed its strategic importance to the inner political situation. To the east and north-east along the line of the Eastern Escarpment overlooking the Danakil Depression and the Red Sea basin is the country of the turbulent Wagara Gallas who were, and who remain, a recurrent threat to internal security. The Wagara clans in fact lie athwart the main south-north route from Addis Ababa to Aduwa and the new and hardly less important motor road down the Escarpment and across the Danakil desert to Assab. [563] During the years 1929-31, each autumn after the Great Rains, the Emperor had not less than thirty thousand men in the field engaged in more or less fruitless marches and counter-marches over the highlands of the Wagara country.

Scarcely less formidable were the great conservative lords of the north: [563] Ras Gugsa of Makale, who afterwards went over to the Italians; Ras Seyum of Tigray, ruling all the country between the upper Takkaze and the Eritrean [635] border; and Ras Gugsa Wolye of Debra Tabor, an ex-husband of the Empress Zawditu, who himself had pretensions to the throne and the support [662] of the powerful centre of the Coptic priesthood in Aduwa.

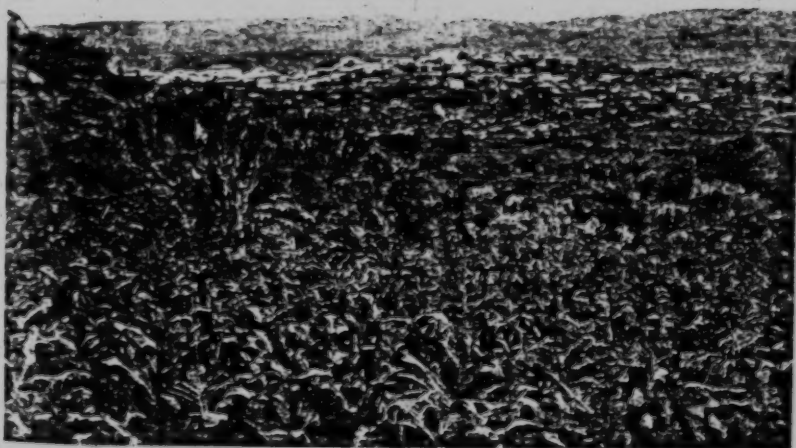
The last great feudal campaign in Ethiopia took place in 1931. The Im-

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Awash river, Northern Aussa

Phot. W. Thiesiger



(Facing p. 12)

Harar

Phot. G. D. Carfield

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of running water, and appeal to such *Dei ex machina* as marine action and waves of translation, cannot see a few such marks of the handiwork of rain and rivers as are shown by these gorges. There is not the slightest possibility, as far as I can see, of explaining their origin by any other force than that of the streams flowing in them. Any faulting or dislocation of the rocks is out of the question, there is no evidence of glacier action at any past time, and even the most fervent apostle of marine denudation would scarcely credit it with the formation of a Titanic trench three-quarters of a mile deep and very little more in breadth." 133

This description would apply equally to the gorges found in other parts of the Ethiopian highlands, for they are all, as far as I have seen, remarkably similar; and no geologist would now question their formation by stream erosion.

The formations of Blanford's area were called by him the Magdala group of "Traps"—an enormously thick, practically horizontal layer of lava flows. They were especially characterized by bands of trachyte, often columnar, weathering to form steep scarps. These formations are probably of late- or post-Cretaceous age, since Blanford's Ashangi Traps (upon which the Magdala group lies unconformably) were tentatively attributed by him to the Upper Cretaceous. Referring to the Magdala Traps Blanford says: "It is highly probable that the Trap rocks of Shoa belong, in part at least, to this group", his belief being based on some descriptions of Rocher d'Hericourt, who travelled in Shoa in the 1840's. My own limited observations confirm this assumption, except that in our area the most conspicuous cliffs and scarps consisted of columnar basalt, not trachyte. The area shown on the map consists of alternating harder and softer layers of volcanic rocks, including basalts, trachytes and tuffs (the latter often used, as in Kenya, for building). They dip slightly to the north-west.

The plateau, which occupies most of the sheet, lies everywhere above 9000 feet. It enjoys a temperate climate, and frosts are not uncommon in December and January. It is swept by easterly winds throughout the year, except when rain is actually threatened or falling, when it commonly turns right round to the west—a frequent occurrence during the long rainy season (June to September). The volcanic rocks have given rise to deep and potentially very fertile soils. The high plateau is mostly short grassland with very little bush, except in places protected both from wind and grazing animals, and very few trees except for small clumps of introduced Eucalyptus which mark almost every inhabited place. Owing to the scarcity of timber a dung-fuel known as *kubat* is usually burnt. At first sight the plateau appears very thinly populated but this, as will be shown, is an illusion. Anything like a village is rare, but isolated homesteads occur almost everywhere on rising ground. Nearly all this country makes good grazing for cattle, sheep and goats, and it is high enough for horses to flourish. Perhaps a third of it is more or less cultivable, though the area under cultivation in any one year is much less. Owing to cold and exposure very few crops flourish on the plateau itself, the principal ones being barley and broad beans. 132

The natural flora of the high plateau is not rich, though in rocky, sheltered spots a succession of attractive herbs and shrubs, including jasmine, a yellow 134
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[177]
[372]
361
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137

[33] developed. I was interested to find, when first exploring this piece of country, that the shelves were well populated, intensively cultivated, and provided with a quite surprising number of churches; facts, as pointed out below, of some historical significance.

[36] After completing the framework of the map I made several calculations of depth in the Beressa gorge. An Abney level was used and as high angles were involved I think the results are trustworthy. They showed a depth of 1808 feet at the point marked *a*, just under 3 miles from the head of the gorge; 1985 feet at point *b*, 4 miles down; and 2170 feet at *c*, not quite 6 miles down. The average gradient from *a* to *b* was therefore about 2½ per cent., from *b* to *c* about 2 per cent. The depths were measured from three points (marked 1-3), all at practically the same level, on the edge of the gorge; the height of which can be taken as about 9300 feet. The absolute level of point *c* is therefore about 7130 feet, and this is almost the lowest point on the sheet. Measurements show that the depth of this gorge, enormously impressive though it is, is not more than one-fifth of its breadth. Although relatively deeper ones no doubt exist, I cannot help being highly sceptical of Rocher d'Hericourt's report of a ravine "14 leagues north-west of Angolala" which he alleged to be 1254 metres deep and only 800 broad!

Four separate gorges figure on the map. The two middle ones, formed by the Beressa and Dalecha rivers, which enclose between them the cliff-encircled plateau of Choli, can be seen to join within 4 to 5 miles of Debra Berhan. It might be supposed that the other two gorges were destined to join the same system within a short distance, but this does not happen. If the small-scale Italian map is to be trusted, the Gunagunit (north-east corner of the sheet) joins the Beressa system some 20 miles away, and the Chacha (of which the north-western gorge is a tributary) nearly 30 miles away. These junctions are approximately north of Debra Berhan; afterwards the river bends away north-westwards to join a main tributary of the Blue Nile. As might be expected, these independent gorge systems running approximately parallel to each other proved most confusing. Between the adjacent systems one sees long, narrow strips of residual plateau, perfectly flat-topped; sometimes so narrow as to stand up like a wall between one valley and the next. The Tallak Amba plateau, partly shown in the north-west of the sheet, is an example. On the other side of the sheet a still narrower neck, followed by the Tegulet path, separates the Beressa and Gunagunit systems. Following this route to the north, off the sheet, one finds that for some distance the plateau has been cut right away: one descends about 600 feet to a point where the shelves in two adjacent valleys practically coalesce, being separated only by a rocky barrier a few feet high. Then one climbs again to a narrow slip of plateau on whose summit, flat as a table-top, stands an important church (Zende gur Ghiorghis). Still farther north this narrows down to a sinuous rampart between the valleys, and eventually broadens once more to form a substantial isolated plateau, which appeared in the distance to be almost inaccessible. Another remarkable feature, jutting out between the Dalecha and the small tributary which next joins the Beressa, is shown near the northern border of the sheet and will be described later.

This region is the heart of the old Shoan kingdom and many places included

11
[11] i.e., the RNEA gorges. Analysis

175 his early twenties, he found his way back to Ankober and assumed his rights as king of Shoa.

Menelik, who was a restless and imaginative character as well as a great soldier, soon began the series of vast conquests in the southern Galla lands which were to double the size of Ethiopia. It is therefore not surprising that he should have abandoned Ankober in favour of a capital within easier reach of his newly acquired territories. He first reverted to Debra Berhan, then made a new temporary capital at Liché, a few miles to the north-east. Here, [172] at one end of a long, low hill are various remains of massive dry-stone walls as at Angolala, and the raised platform, only about 20 feet across, on which stood Menelik's personal dwelling. But the site is now uninhabited. In the 1830's Menelik, his southern conquests rapidly extending, moved his capital south-westwards to Entotto, in the midst of country newly retrieved from the Gallas. This was a magnificent site, 10,000 feet high and overlooking the plain and the splendid circle of mountains which form the setting of the present capital. Entotto was, however, unsuitable as the site of a permanent city. It is said, also, that Menelik's wife Taitu craved for a warmer residence [312] and especially for the curative waters of the hot springs (the present Fil Wuha baths) on the edge of the plain below. So in 1889, the year in which he was crowned emperor in succession to John IV, Menelik moved down, and Addis Ababa was founded at the foot of the hills, 1500 feet below.

This digression completes our brief review of the historical associations of the area represented on the map. The remainder of this paper will deal with the present inhabitants, their distribution and their way of life.

● 361 It has already been said that the population of the area is greater than at first sight appears. The small, stone-built huts are inconspicuous objects, especially as they are seldom massed together to form a village but are widely scattered in small groups. Moreover the motor-road follows for the most part an exposed tract which carries less than the normal population. Travellers driving through therefore carry away a false impression: they can see little of the more populated areas, nothing of the gorges, and not a single one of the numerous churches of the region, except those of Debra Berhan itself.

I attempted to mark every inhabited place on the map. In very many cases the single dot indicates several households, and may be taken to represent, on an average, two households of five to six persons each or eleven souls. On [162] this basis the population of the whole area of 102 square miles comes to about 361 15,500 or 152 per square mile—a high average by African standards. (This excludes Debra Berhan itself which would add a further 2000 or so.) The population is not, however, evenly distributed, and the area may be divided into three parts which, with their areas and population densities (again ignoring Debra Berhan) are as follows:

General plateau: 60 square miles—116 per square mile.

Plateau between or within 1 km. of gorges: 22 square miles—240 per square mile.

The gorges themselves: 20 square miles—162 per square mile. (This indicates a very high concentration on the "shelves" and a few other favoured spots, for a great part of the gorge area is, of course, uninhabitable.)

These figures show that the gorges, together with the adjoining and intervening plateau, carry a considerably higher population than the rest of the plateau, the combined average being over 200 per square mile. The figures for population per church are also interesting. The gorges and the adjacent parts of the plateau contain no fewer than thirteen churches and they serve an average population of only some 650 souls each. On the other hand the churches of the general plateau, not counting those of Debra Berhan, which chiefly serve the townspeople, number only four. They must cater for about three times as many people each, and until recently many more for two of them are recent foundations. 162 361 [346]

The higher population of the gorge region is attributable to two causes: the greater productivity of the land there, and the historical fact, already referred to, that the Amharas were long forced to live in the gorges, and have re-emerged only in recent times. This is confirmed by the evidence of the churches which, in such numbers, are sure evidence of a long-established Christian population. The oldest ones are among those in the depths of the gorges; sites on the edges of gorges seem to be more recent. The few plateau churches are all relatively modern and bespeak the re-occupation by Amharas; two of them were indeed founded within the last fifteen years, and one as recently as 1945. 174 361

As can be seen from the map, sites chosen for dwellings are usually on the higher ground. The favourite sites, of which many examples can be seen on the sheet, are rocky ridges and the tops or upper slopes of hills and minor plateaus. A high place with an outlook, together with reasonable proximity to permanent water, seem to be the conditions sought after. Even the most elevated and exposed hill-tops are generally inhabited, whereas nobody tries to live on the plains near the main streams, which become very swampy in the rains. The ordinary family, together with its domestic animals, lives in a small, irregular cluster of round huts, which in this area are built of stone cemented with mud and carry a conical thatched roof. They are surrounded, as a rule, by a dry-stone wall, which may be shared by several households. Richer people may have an ornamental gatehouse at the main entry, with a little watchman's room over the gate; but such ostentation was not common. 361 [342] [558]

Disregarding some of the Debra Berhan people, almost the entire population is engaged in farming which, here as elsewhere in Ethiopia, is the mainstay of existence. Some possess their own land; others hold their plots, in return for a proportion of the produce (but without any security of tenure), from absentee landowners. There is also a landless element, greatly increased through the disturbing influence of the Italian occupation, who hire themselves out as ploughmen and labourers. I had intended to measure some typical holdings in order to estimate the area actually required to support a family, but my time in the area was cut short and I never did so. As a very rough estimate I think that about 15-20 per cent. of the area is under cultivation in any one year, which would indicate an average per family of something like 4 acres. This does not include fallow land which, once re-grown with grass, cannot be distinguished at a glance from permanent pasture. 241 423

The most exposed parts of the plateau near Debra Berhan will grow two crops only, barley and broad beans, but a limited amount of wheat (a bearded 241

- 361 I have tried to describe a small section of the old Shoan people in their geographical and historic setting. But this small community, living along the broken edges of the Shoan plateau, typifies the much larger unity of the Amhara nation. Mostly they live in country which resembles either the plateau or the gorges, for they are a mountain people and will not live in the low country; and over most of the Ethiopian highlands their way of life, while varying in detail, is fundamentally the same. Everywhere outside the towns the force of tradition is incomparably stronger than any modern influence, so that life remains, in essentials, what it has been for centuries.
- [81] I have never come across such a staunch (not to say arrogant) conservatism—a conservatism centred mostly round the old Church which, now as ever, organizes the life of the community. The manifestations of modernity and progress, which now attract some attention in the larger towns, hardly affect the rural picture, and the rural population is content without them. I myself was content without them too, for I valued very highly the experience of sharing the life of a community whose customs, founded on the most ancient traditions, belong essentially to an earlier and to me a congenial age. This
- [609] was one of the compensations for living in a country where life is necessarily a strain, since the inquisitive foreigner is not really welcome.

133
487
712
361
312
346



[End map II-A]

133
487
112
361
312
346



(End map II-B)

SHOAN PLATEAU
Buxton

[pp. 1-20 have not been processed for the files. - Analyst]

CAP. XI.—*Of the fashion and situation of the monasteries and their customs, first this of St. Michael.*

346 The manner of these monasteries as to their sites and
 ● 361 customs: all are situated on the greatest and highest cliffs,
 or the deepest they can find. This one of St. Michael is
 situated on a very steep rock at the foot of another very
 high rock, where no one can ascend. The stone of which
 these rocks consist is of the grain of the walls of the port
 of Portugal.¹ They are very great rocks. The land around
 137 these rocks is all covered with very great forests, and
 besides wild olive trees and high grass between them, in
 which there is much basil. The trees which are not wild
 olive trees are not trees known to us; all are without fruit.
 In the narrow valleys which belong to this monastery there
 are orange trees, lemon trees, citron trees, pear trees and
 fig trees of all kinds, both of Portugal and India; peach
 trees, cabbages, coriander, cardamine, wormwood,² myrtle and
 other sweet-smelling and medicinal herbs, all ill profited by
 1461 because they are not good working men: and the earth
 produces these like wild plants, and it would produce
 whatever was planted and sown in it. The monastery house
 346 looks quite like a church building, constructed like ours.
 It has around it a circuit like a cloister, covered above in
 the same manner as the body of the monastery. It has
 three entrances, as ours are, one principal one, and two side
 ones. The roof of the church and of its cloisters is of wild
 straw, which lasts a man's life: the body of the church is
 built with naves very well constructed, and their arches are

231 a Christian, because the cows that they keep belong to
 563 Christian gentlemen of the country of the Barnagais. These
 Moors have nothing else for their labour than the milk and
 butter which they get from the cows, and with this they
 maintain themselves and their wives and children. On
 some occasions it happened to us to sleep near these Arabs,
 they accosted us to ask if we wished to buy cows, and for
 the price allowed us to choose them. They say that these
 [484] Moors, and headmen who go with them, are all robbers
 under the favour of the lords to whom the cows belong,
 and so only large caravans travel. The revenues of this
 792 monastery are very large; those which I saw and heard of
 631 are, chiefly, this mountain in which the monastery is situated,
 361 of an extent of ten leagues, in which they sow much millet.
 [243] barley, rye, and all these pay dues to the monastery, and
 they are also paid on the herds. On the skirts of this
 mountain there are many large villages, and most of them
 belong to the monastery, and at a distance of one or two
 days' journey an infinite number of places belonging to the
 monastery, and are called *Gultus* of the monastery, which
 means *coutos* or *celeiros*,¹ according to our Portugal. Don
 Rodrigo the ambassador and I were going on the road to
 the Court, a good five days' journey from this monastery,
 and arriving at a town which is named *Caina* we kept
 Saturday and Sunday in a small village which might contain
 twenty people, and they told us they belonged to the
 monastery of Bisan. Besides that town there were a
 hundred villages all belonging to the monastery, and that
 in which we halted was one of them. We were also shown
 651 many of the others, and they told us that every three years
 631 they paid a horse to the monastery, and that each village
 792 did this, which makes thirty-three horses every year. And
 in order to be certain of this I went to ask it of the *Alicaxi*
 of the monastery, which means the auditor or major-domo,

¹ *Couto*, an asylum, an enclosure: *celeiro*, a granary.

804 night. And if it is distant they say, you will arrive in a *sambete*, that is a week, and so they define it according to the distances. When I said that from Barua to Barra there
 484 were from three and a half up to four leagues, that was according to our opinion, and it would not be more. We afterwards travelled there many times, and we started from one town and dined at the other, and did our business and returned to the town we had started from by daylight. The people of the country reckon this as a day's journey, because they travel very slowly. Between these two towns
 [24] there is very remarkable country, tilled fields of wheat, barley, millet, pulse, lentils, and all other sorts of vegetables which the country possesses unknown to us. From the
 [36] road from one place to the other more than fifty towns are to be seen: I say large towns and very good ones, all on
 224 heights. In these plains and fields there are herds of wild cattle, forty or fifty in a herd. It is a chase that is very pleasant for the Portuguese, but the country people are able to do them little hurt, although they receive from them much injury to their crops.

CAP. XX.—*Of the town of Barua, and of the women and their traffic, and of the marriages which are made outside of the churches.*

621 This town of Barua in which we were staying, and where later we passed more time, may have three hundred hearths and more, a great part of them belonging to women, because this is like a court in many respects. One is that people of the Prester's court never go from here, and as many as come are not without wives. The other is because this is the residence and seat of the Barnagais, and there are continually in his house three hundred mounted men and upwards, and as many more who come every day for

000 a burn, because their colour is dark. On the occasion of
764 death, I never saw great personages borne away; but of small people, and of others rather better, an infinite number. Their burials are in this manner. They do not use candles after death, but much incense. They carry them away wrapped up¹ in a shroud, and some of the more honoured have over the shroud tanned ox-hides, and are placed on trestles. The priests come for them, and pray shortly, and then set out at once with them on the way to the church, with cross, thurible, and holy water, running so that a man cannot catch them up. They do not bring the dead man into the church, but place him close to the grave; they do not use our office for him, nor do they recite psalms, neither do they say anything from the Book of Job. I asked what it was that they prayed; they told me that they read the Gospel of St. John all complete. And so they give him to the grave with their incense and holy water, and they do not say mass for the defunct, nor of devotion for any living person, nor more than one mass a day in each church; and all are communicants, as many as go to it.

CAP. XXIII.—*Of the situation of the town of Barua, chief place of the kingdom of the Barnagais, and of his hunting.*

- 361 This town of Barua is very good, and it is situated on a very high rock above a river, upon which are situated the king's houses, which they call Beteneguz, which means houses of the king. They are well situated in the manner of a fortress. All the rest is a great plain and an infinite number of large villages at the extremities of the fields. There is much breeding of all sorts of flocks, cows, goats and sheep, and of much game of all sorts. *Envorilhados for enrodilhados.*
- [231]

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF BRAGA. 403

He said that no men died at the hands of justice, that 681
they flogged many, and put out the eyes of some, and of
others they cut off a foot or a hand, according to the quality
the crime; but that he had seen a man burned because he
was found to have committed two robberies in a church.

That the Pope or Patriarch of the country of Prester 793
John is called Abima, which means father, and that there is
nobody else in all the kingdoms and lordships of the Prester
who confers orders except him.

The Prester John is called Acegue,¹ which means em- 643
peror, and he is called Neguz, which means king.

There is no manner of physic, only they apply fire; in some 752
sickness they use cupping without fire, and for headaches, 757
they bleed on the head with a knife placed on the vein,
and they strike it with a stick so that it should draw
blood, and also they take some herbs as a beverage to cure
themselves.

In all the country there is no town which exceeds one thou- 621
sand six hundred inhabitants, and of these there are few, and 361 ●
there are no walled towns or castles, but villages without num-
ber. The houses generally, or most of them, are round, and 342
all of one story, covered with terraces or thatch, and court-
yards round them. People generally sleep on ox-hides, others 352
on beds made of straps of the same hides; no kind of table.
They eat in flat trenchers, like trays of great width, without 415
napkins or tablecloths. They have basins of very black 264
earthenware-like jet, and pipkins of the same clay for
drinking water and wine. Many eat raw meat, and others 262
eat it roasted on the ashes, others roasted over woodfire, 252
and others over cowdung where there is no wood. There is 373
much wax there, and tapers and candles; they do not make
candles of tallow. There is no oil there except a kind which 314
they call *hena*, and which is made from some herbs like
Mayweed;² it has no taste, and is beautiful as gold. There 000

¹ *Acegue*, an Emperor.

² *Pampilhos*, also called *olho de boy*.

~~70~~
APPENDIX TO

585 known, in Europe. These marriages are, by no means, permanent: Many of the Ozoros, who always rule their husbands, marry as often as they please; dissolving the marriage preceding at the dictates of convenience, or fancy. But notwithstanding the general licentiousness, there are found several faithful wives and mothers, who are content to deviate from the common example.

766 When any of the king's children dies, it is the custom to hang the audience-chamber with tapestry and curtains, and spread carpets on the floor. The king, having entered, sits on the throne, and the *iteagerd*, a set of professed mourners of the female sex, along with the nobles and household-servants, attend. One of the *licaonte*, a priest, reads over a list of the former kings with great solemnity, adding, after every name, "May the Lord have mercy on his soul, even to the fifth generation." The assembly reply, "Amen, ycoune, so let it be." At last he says, "Greatly may the Lord have mercy on the soul of ***, who died this day;" on which the Ozoros and their women, the mourners, the household, and the nobles, all set up a loud and general cry of lamentation, and weep for some time. If the person has died in the camp, or city, the coffin is brought before the king, but if not, he performs the ceremony without it. It is afterwards carried out with *sendic* and *nagareet*, and buried by the *Bet-wudet*, or *Billetana-gueta dakakin*, in the manner which shall be afterwards mentioned.

● 361 Koscam * is the richest church in Abyssinia; it is situated on the banks of Kahha, below a ruinous palace, or house, of the king. There are about 40 houses in the village, all belonging to the principal Kuaragna, the party of the queen. All the Kuaragna, Eshte, Eusebius, and the rest, had their troops drawn up to attack Michael when called to Gondar by Joas, at the advice of Lubo. They designed to engage him on the Angrab, but failed completely. The residing people at Koscam, after Joas's death, were in great fear of Michael, and wore a hood, or cowl, like the monks. Gondar is 2½ miles, perhaps 3, at its greatest length, and nowhere above a mile broad. The palace is in the centre. Below the town, on the S. W. at the conflux of

BOOKS VII. AND VIII.

71

the Angrab and Kahha, is the Mahometan town. These rivers inclose the town on its N. and S. sides, and join on the W. On the S. E. part of it is the church of Debra-berhan. On the N. E. is Kedus Gabriel. Two suburbs above Kedus Gabriel, is Anta Naggar, the hill, where, till Yasous's time, the Tigre, in consequence of a proclamation, were obliged to halt, and not allowed to enter Gondar.

In Abyssinia there remains not a shadow of the hospitality, which is said to be a trait in the character of barbarous nations.

They divide the day into five parts (humisi). From the twilight, which is here short, it is nagga; about nine it is called selest, or the third hour; mid-day is kutter; three o'clock, tessaat; and sun-set, serk. They judge by the height of the sun, having neither clocks nor watches. The other hours mentioned in their books are counted 1, 2, 3, &c. after dawn, sun-rise, or sun-set.

There are two kinds of monarchy; one is absolute, where there are no written laws, but the will of the prince carried into effect by his command and force; another is, where there are laws and restraints, but these occasionally broken through. The Abyssinian government is neither of those. There are no laws: the lives of the king's subjects and their lands are *de jure* his; he is absolute and sole master of their lives and property: Yet he has no military force; this is all in the hands of the governors of provinces, whose safety lies in keeping the prince in want of every thing. It is a monstrous kind of monarchy, and to this are owing the continual wars and rebellions. While the districts were small, these were prevented; but minorities, weak reigns, &c. have united them into great ones, each of which are more than a match for the sovereign; indeed, the forty-four nagareets of Tigre united are more than a match for all Abyssinia. Damot and Agow-midre, joined to Maitsha, when they please, starve the capital, and leave the king not only without army and provisions, but even meat and clothes for himself. The Turkish and Galla wars have accelerated this state of affairs. Each of the governments have become a kind of fiefs, very rarely not granted to the family of the deceased, and that one of it most likely to be serviceable.

[p. 53]

BOOKS VII. AND VIII.

55

principal revenue of the clergy is the presents made by ^{The} 794
those who are sick, or dying.

The dress of the Acab sant is a purple burnoose, with a 292
white turban, not unlike the Turkish Imams, or a white hand-
kerchief hanging loose behind. The Kees hatze is the king's
official confessor, official Alaka of the church of Tecla-haima-
nout, and curator of the two churches of Gondar.

The Abuna's words of absolution, in a case of excommuni- [783]
cation, is, "Gzier ephiac," God absolve thee.

Women, after having born a son, are excluded from the 796
church 40 days, and if a daughter, 80. The really married 784
are those who receive the sacrament on that occasion. Per- [846]
sons who have been connected with any woman, are exclu-
ded from church during three days; if that connection has
been promiscuous, they are excluded seven; and then even
admitted to receive the sacrament. If a man, really married, is
guilty with another's wife, he is not debarred a longer peri-
od. Women in the menses are not allowed to enter the [84.]
church till seven days afterwards. Circumcision is perform- [304]
ed on the eight, and baptism is celebrated on the forty-first [852]
day of the child's age. On all the fore-mentioned occa-
sions they only come within the inner precinct, and kiss the
walls and door-posts of the church. The clergy are rigid in
these matters, and that is, perhaps, one of the reasons why
the churches are ill-attended. It is their only duty; the
monks making no scruple of confessing that they cannot enter
the church, for that day they had to do with a woman,
which is not attended with any impeachment.

Geography and revenue of Abyssinia.—The Itegehe from Bure 131
in two days arrived at Metchakel, in her way to Gojam: It 361 ●
may be about as far as from this (Gondar) to Caroota; I sup-
pose from 30 to 32 miles at farthest. From Metchakel to
Nazarit six days easy journey; from 10 to 12 miles, I sup-
pose, *per diem*. Gojam here belongs to Ayto Aylo, son of
Ozoro Wellela Israel. The Galla are Toluma. The Galla 101
who border on Amhara are much the worst of all the Gal-
la, and the least worst are the Edjow east of them, bordering
upon Begemder and Angot, called Guangoul Galla. Those
near Amhara are Wurchali, Wooló, Amito, and Toluma;

[p. 57]

101 and these Toluma come down to the Nile, and divide Wala-
ka and Shoa from the Nile.

651 Agow-midre pays yearly to the king in all about 1000
ounces of gold; and 1000 dabras of honey, each dabra about
60 rotol. It pays also about 1000 or 1500 cattle. Ancasha,
Azena, Quaquera, and Banja, pay their quota in honey;
Banja, gold; Metchakel, Ayamico's country, gold; Zigam,
gold, no honey. Danguiah, Dengla, and Saccala, all are call-
ed Ancasha. Dengla pays chiefly cattle, and a large kind of
sheep called Macoot. Butter is no part of the meery, but is
brought as a present on paying the meery. After passing
the Kelti, on the right, by the Bronti, is Atchefer, after that
Quaquera, then Dengla, then Banja, then Metchakel. Temhua
belongs to the Ras, and the revenue is paid to him. The
first heavy stroke the Agow received of late years was Wa-
ragna, father of this Fasil, bringing Galla from beyond the
Abay, and wasting their country entirely. He burnt the
houses and churches, and led away captive the women and
children. Under the mild government of Casmati Eshte they
began to revive, but now again under Fasil they are very
low.

361 Metchakel is one long day's journey, I suppose 36 miles,
from Boori (Bure); it is inhabited by Galla Djawi. After
these are the Basso Gallo; and the Gooderoo Galla of Kas-
mati Boro. His place is called Hadis Amba. These border
on Gojam, Damot, and Metchakel. Gafat is not one conti-
nued country, but villages here and there. Wumbarma is
Gafat. Metchakel is, however, a much more considerable
country. Beyond the Nile, west of Bure, the country for a
considerable distance is dry, deserted, and uninhabited, the
Galla living further into the territory. All the banks are
here high, steep, and unwholesome, and full of trees. These
Galla are Amoro Jidda. Guesgue belongs to the Iteghe, has
a nagareet, and gives the title of Kasmati. It pays 1000
cloths, 50 oxen, and 100 wakeet.

The caravans of Egypt used to go from Aidab, or Gaidab,
to Dahalac, in their way to Yemen, or Jidda, the port of
Mecca. Souakin is seven days south of Gaidab.

101 The Galla, west of the Abay, say, that they are descended
563 of a Gin or devil, and a woman of the tribe of Koreish.
They are always at war with the Nareans, Abyssinians, or

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Mahometans. They reckon about 12,000 horse of Galla ¹⁰¹ between the Nile and Narea. The tribes go every seventh ⁵⁶³ year to the reigning house, where the council debates on the duties of government. The points agitated are, how our fathers governed, what measures are to be taken with murderers and robbers on the high-ways, how merchants are to be dealt with, &c. The young then declaim in favour of violence and injustice; after which the elders, five in number, are asked. These decide in favour of equity. The king is afterwards chosen by a plurality of voices.

Waragna, father of Fasil, was converted to Christianity. His father was Wusho (signifying a dog), of the western Galla, of the tribe Jimmali. He was a merchant; but being remarked to be brave in a battle Bacuffa had with these Galla, he was invested with the cañon, and made commander of several places on the frontiers of Damot.

The Djawi Galla of Damot, Gafat, and Metchakel, as also the Galla of Maitsha, came there, in the time of Yasous Tallac. The Basso, and other Galla of Gojam, were brought there by Hatze Fasil; others say his son Hannes.

Maitsha, from the place the Abay comes out of the lake ³⁶¹ to Courtolha, is $1\frac{1}{2}$ day's march, at a moderate pace, 6 hours a day; from Courtolha, the hither part, to Samseen, one long day's journey; and from the same part to the Abay at Goutta, a very long day's journey, at a brisk pace.

The Shankala entrench their huts against surprise, and burn large fires. They wear a long shield, covering nearly ⁵⁶³ the whole side, and five lances each, which they throw or stab with as needed. Bows and arrows are their chief weapons. They dig up gold among reddish earth, which they burn in the fire, and gather it as it runs out in small pieces like shot. They put it next in to a small purse, or other sort of bag. Every individual is free to search for it. They are flat-nosed and flat-lipped, very black, best shaped in the upper parts, but with bad knees and legs.

The Bure way to Narea is W. in the country south by A-⁴⁸⁷ moro. The nearest way is by Gojam and Gooderoo, performed in 30 days with loaden asses, about eight or nine miles a-day.

Harar is a very large town, has five gates; and is constant-³⁶¹ ly at war with Habbesh, or the Galla. The ridge of hills

[p. 59]

- 36/ continues from Masuah to Cape Gardafan. Harar, Adel, and the Gibbertis, all-hate Franks and Christians. Their prince is an Imam. The road north to the Toluma Galla is nearest by Harar; to the Woolo by Aussa. There runs the large river Hawash. There is no communication with the sea at Harar, which is surrounded on the south and east by multitudes of Galla through all that country to the interior of the continent of Africa.

From the Toluma Galla, which is one day south of Amhara to Gurague, is seven days of an ass from morning to night, I suppose 15 to 16 miles per day. From Gurague to Narea, 4 days; in their way they pass the Bashilo, but not the Kibbee, which passes through Narea. The Bashilo falls into the Abay before they pass Angheree, and they meet with it past Gerramidre before they enter Gurague.

From Raheeda to Aussa, 5 or 6 days. From Aussa to Harar, 6 days moderate journey; in 4 a strong man can accomplish it. From Raheeda to the Woolo, 15 days; from these to Amhar., 3 days. From Raheeda to Woolo all the country is plain; the journey is performed with camels, I suppose 10 miles per day. They carry water with them in girbas, and at one time are three or four days without any other supply. Aussa is now no separate kingdom, but dependant on Harar; the race of people was from Harar, and therefore they are not subject to strangers. They are called Mellassua, and still preserve their language, which is the same with that of the Gibbertis. They count up 317 kings. From this city was Mahomet Gagne. The whole country is Adel; from Zeila to Harar is 8 days journey; but Zeila is now little inhabited, on account of the faithlessness of the natives in robbing the Jelalib. Soomal is governed by a chief at peace with Adel. Harar, the capital of Adel, has 99 villages, all governed each by a vizir, and pay tribute.

Goutta is not in Daniet, though depending on it. A small peaked hill, pointed with rock, is called Geesh, or Gutch. Southward, scarce a quarter of a mile from the fountains of the Nile, the plain ends in a precipice, planted with very tall sambues, and other trees. In this is a cavern called Washa, which they say communicates with the fountains, and that when it rains violently the water overflows and comes in thither. The Shum Kalla Abas told me, that in the constant

rains of Naasse and Hamlie, it never overflows at the springs, 361
nor do the fountains seem larger. He remembered the ac-
cession of Hatze Yaseou to the throne, and was about 80
years old. The east side of the Nile is less barren than the
west side. 'Aformasha is not barren.

Singular custom. The Betwudet (in Habesh), upon the 651
death of any Wizirow, is obliged to pay the expences of the 766
ceremony, called Misle, which amounts to 100 oxen, 3000
leaves of wheat bread, 20 jars hydromel, wood, &c. the whole
about 60 ounces of gold. The ceremony is this: A sort of
figure, resembling the defunct, is placed upon horseback,
in his usual dress, and so carried in procession about the
outer court of the palace, with the royal standard (sendick)
carried before it, and the nagareet beating. This is called, in
this country, "burying with sendick and nagareet;" for
which the Betwudet has 1200 ardeb of wheat yearly out of
the Attekolla.

The route of the Islam merchants, S. is by two ways, with 487
loaden asses, 8 or 9 miles per day. The way by Gojam is
performed in 30 days to Sebou, and thence for other 10 to
Narea. The Kibby, or Zebee, rises in Narea. Coffee, of
different kinds, grows there in abundance, and the Galla feed
on it. They use the lex-talionis, but their internal justice is
strict. They are very scrupulous of oaths: Wauke Laftan,
by heaven and earth, is one of the most solemn. There are
three races of Galla, the Guangoul in Angot, north-east of
Begemder; Mahomet Ali, another farther west than the
Guangoul, towards Amhara; and a third, Mahomet, brother
of Lubo, west of Amhara. The rest are pagans; but when
converted are said to be better Christians than the native A-
byssinians.

Mahabar Selasse is four commodious days journey from 133
Gondar, in the line of Tchemmera and Tenkel. Near it pass
the rivers Shiinfa and Gandova, the last of which has several
very high cataracts; it joins to the Shankala, and is about
two days journey from Tchemmera. Both rivers fall into the
Nile.

The river Bashilo separates Amhara from Begemder; the
Mashilla, a river of Gojam, and the river Nefasse, fall into
the Nile at the same place. In the country of the Galla
west of Damot, across or west of the Abay, there is little

[p. 61]

5: Bruce T.-5 (1768-1773) 1804

MP5 Amhara MP5

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APPENDIX TO

133 water, and near the banks of the river the country is desert.

651 Damot pays 800 ounces (wakea) of gold; formerly 1000. Gojam 80 ounces, and 70 mules. Lasta 1000 ounces; these last years it pays no more, being at present annexed to Begemder. Tigre pays 400 ounces in salt and cotton cloths. Walcalt 1500 ounces in cotton cloths.

131 The latitude of Adderghey is $13^{\circ} 24' 56''$; of Macara, on Lamalmen, $13^{\circ} 6' 8''$; of Gondar, $12^{\circ} 34' 30''$; of Emfras, $12^{\circ} 12' 38''$; of the fountains, $10^{\circ} 58' 58''$.

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000 *Note at Lekeia.*—The Arabs are fond of music, especially vocal; for they have no instruments but a kind of flute, of the size of a German flute, which gives a wild and not unmelodious sound, and the cymbal or drum, with ten pieces fixed to its sides, which is chiefly used in cadence in dancing, or for symphonies. Their vocal music, or songs, are upon first hearing disagreeable; but it rarely happens that one who has a good ear is not soon fond of them. They are all upon love; at least I never heard any that had war for their subject; some have religion, and are sung by their Shekhs, or saints. The former have effects upon their hearers nearly as extravagant as the ancient music produced. They have no music in parts, and have absolutely no idea of harmonical composition.

[pp. 51-52 have not been processed for the files. - Analyst]

[p. 62]

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dolphus put it.⁴ At length, unable to witness the further decimation of his people because of religious controversies, Susneyos abdicated in favor of his son Fäsil. Fäsil lost little time in deporting the Jesuits and restoring the Orthodox status quo.

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Recovery

In the wake of all these collisions, Ethiopia made two valiant attempts to regain equilibrium and glory: through the splendor of Gondar in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and through the force of three emperors of the nineteenth century—Tēwodros II, Yohānnes IV of Tigre, and Menēlik II of Shoa.

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Gondar was founded as a new and stationary capital by Fäsil. It served as imperial headquarters for many generations. Later, the kingdom of Tigre knew a resurgence of power that led to control of the empire under Yohānnes (1872-89). His castle at Makalle symbolized one last rally for the north—after an interregnum of a thousand years—before being eclipsed by the Shoa throne.

The shock which began with the invasions of Ahmad Grāñ shattered Ethiopia's medieval synthesis once and for all. The political consequence of those disruptions was an increase in provincialism, reaching its climax in the famous "Age of the Princes" (1755-1855) when each province had its own sovereign and for all practical purposes was a polity unto itself. The Solomonic line, the matrix of Ethiopian political unity, was splintered in several directions, leaving contenders in each of the provinces. Though the official imperial line remained at Gondar, Tigre was able to reassert its ancient claims and Gojjam recurrently voiced its separatism, and what may be called the "House of Manz" came to compete with Gondar as a center of national consciousness.

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This political division was accompanied by a peculiar cultural bifurcation. Elements of the national culture that had been rather evenly distributed before Ahmad Grāñ now became relatively specialized in Gondar and Manz. The recovery of Ethiopia produced a geographical division of manners and morals as well as several lines of Solomonic royalty.

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HISTORICAL PROFILES

The Role of Gondar

Gondar is the only city in Ethiopia with charm and character expressive of Amhara culture. Even today, despite modern accretions, the remnants of its castles, walls, bridges, and sanctuaries transmit a stately calm, redolent of past nobility and African grandeur.

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The town is situated on a flat volcanic ridge at seven thousand feet above

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[GONDAR]

22 / WAX & GOLD

- *175 sea level. It is surrounded by three rings of high mountains, which afforded
 • 361 military protection in times past and today provide handsome scenery. Only
 toward the south is a direct land route alluring, as the ridge descends toward
 the fertile plains of Dambiyā and the waters of Tānā, largest lake in Ethiopia.
 [132] Because of its intermediate altitude, Gondar escapes the chill of higher re-
 gions and the intense sun of the lowlands: its climate is among the most
 [312] pleasant in Ethiopia. Water is supplied by two streams—the Angarab and the
 Qīha—which enclose the town, then flow together down to Lake Tānā
 [32] twenty-one miles away. Adequate rains throughout the year assure two, some-
 [241]

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 643 TABLE 1
 THE HOUSES OF GONDAR AND MANZ

GONDARINE EMPERORS WHO RULED WITH FULL POWER		THE LINE OF INDEPENDENT SHOAN RULERS		
Name	Dates of Reign	Name	Highest Rank Attained	Dates of Reign
Fāsil (Fāsīladas).....	1632-67	Nagāsai (Nagāsē Kristos)	Abēto	1697-1703
Yohānnes I (the Pious).....	1667-82	Sebstē (Sebstyānos).....	Maridāzmāṭch	1705-20
Iyāsu I (the Great).....	1682-1706	Abbiyē.....	Maridāzmāṭch	1720-45
Takla Hāymānot I.....	1706-8	Amhāyas (Amhā Iyasus).....	Maridāzmāṭch	1745-75
Tēwoslos.....	1708-11	Asfā Wassan.....	Maridāzmāṭch	1775-1808
Yostos.....	1711-16	Wassan Sagad.....	Rās	1808-13
Dāwit III (the Singer).....	1716-21	Sahla Selassie.....	Negus	1813-47
Bakāffa (the Inexor- able).....	1721-30	Haile Malakot.....	Negus	1847-55
Iyāsu II (the Little).....	1730-35	***	***	***
		Menelik II.....		
		As ruler of Shoa.....	Negus	1865-89
		As emperor of Ethiopia.....	Negusa Nagast	1889-1913

- *175
 361 times three, crops in the hinterland. Tēff and other grains, oilseed, honey, and
 [132] livestock are produced in abundance.
 [241]
 [231] The population of Gondar approached seventy thousand during the city's
 *175 time of power.⁵ Thereafter it declined to but a few thousands. The towns-
 633 people of Gondar have been chiefly traders, priests, scribes, soldiers, artisans,
 [162] and drink-house proprietresses. Like the inhabitants of Aksum, they are more
 [63] conscious of Ethiopian history than people elsewhere in the country, as well
 they might be.

- [173] Gondar was founded by Emperor Fāsil about 1635. Legend says that he
 was inspired to plant his capital there because of a prophecy that Ethiopia
 would attain its greatest power if its capital were established in a place whose
 [36] name began with the syllable Go. More practical considerations were surely

[GONDAR]

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the proximity to water, the protective rings of mountains, and the healthy distance from Galla tribes. 175*
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When Fāsīl arrived at Gondar, then no more than an insignificant village, he pitched his tent near a large sycamore. This magnificent tree, one of the landmarks of Gondar, became the site of popular celebrations on holidays. Not far from this tree Fāsīl decided to construct his castle, the largest and best preserved of the castles of Gondar. Thus began an ambitious program of building, which included the construction of seven churches, a number of bridges over the streams around Gondar, and a large bath, next to which Fāsīl placed a three-story pavilion. In the course of the following century Fāsīl's successors added many more buildings, including a total of twenty-one additional churches. Of the secular buildings, the castles of Bakāffā and Empress Mantuāb and the "Recreation Hall" of Dāwit III were the most outstanding. 361 • 175*
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In their political endeavors, Gondar's monarchs began by upholding the Abyssinian tradition of a warrior king. Though unable to secure definitive victories over his enemies, Fāsīl was continually joining battle with them. He spent all but five of his thirty-five years of rule on the warpath. The reign of Yohānnes the Pious was marked more by religious than military preoccupations, but warfare on a small scale was carried out during half the years he ruled. Yohānnes' son, Iyāsu the Great, seized the spear with renewed vigor and brought Gondar to the pinnacle of its might. Iyāsu's campaigns carried him to far parts of the empire, some of which were not again to be visited by a triumphant Amhara king until two centuries later. 175*
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On Iyāsu's return from one of his famous field tours, Gondar suffered a misfortune that ushered in a long era of political disorganization. Learning that his favorite concubine had died and been buried while he was away, the grief-stricken Iyāsu withdrew to one of the monastic islands of Lake Ṭānā. His son, Takla Hāymānot, took advantage of the situation to have himself proclaimed emperor; and shortly after, probably encouraged by those of the clergy who mistrusted Iyāsu's sympathy for Catholicism, he had his father assassinated on the isle.

The next four emperors had short and brutish reigns. Takla Hāymānot, Tēwoflos, and Yostos were occupied mainly with the quashing of conspiracy and rebellion. Even so, they had time for the favored sports of hunting wild animals and raiding Galla and Negroid tribes. Dāwit III, it seems, did not even accomplish that. The chief slaughter in his reign was of the local clergy; he brought Muslim Gal'a to massacre hundreds of the monks and priests of Gondar, for they had opposed his theological views. All four emperors ended ignobly. Takla Hāymānot was stabbed to death; Tēwoflos was probably poisoned; Yostos, not of the Solomonic line, was forcibly deposed; and Dāwit III was poisoned. Bakāffā was more careful to protect himself from pretend-

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Perhaps this sort of disposition was not unrelated to the part Manz played in 181 sparking the restoration of Amhara rule in Shoa, thereby preparing the way 175* for the dramatic resurgence and expansion of the Ethiopian state at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Gondarë Ethos

The unique character of Gondar derives first of all from the fact that it was 175* a city. During the whole period of Ethiopian history reviewed in this chap- 633 ter, the Gondar period was the only time in which the emperors resided in a 643 fixed capital, and Gondar was the only permanent population center that grew beyond the contours of a large village. As in ancient Egypt before the rise of Thebes, the concept of the city had played scarcely any role in the political thinking of the Amhara, and so anomalous was the rise of Gondar that Ludolphus, writing in the fifth decade after the founding of Gondar, could not believe stories that Gondar was a large city and predicted that "perhaps in a few years there will be nothing to be seen of it."³⁸

Like many oriental cities, Gondar consisted more of a collection of small 175* homogeneous societies than of a diffused heterogeneous urban population. 633 The city was divided into several quarters, each of which lived its own life. 361 • The imperial compound was of course foremost of these. It contained the great complex of buildings erected during more than a hundred years, from Fäsil to Iyäsü II, and was the seat of affairs of state. The compound was separated from the rest of the city by a stone wall, whose twelve well-guarded 333 gates each served a special function or class of people.³⁹

The nobility resided in a quarter known as Gaing Bêt. Here the dwellings 565 were spaced at comfortable distances, and nearly every house was surrounded 351 by a garden. Abyssinians of lower rank lived in the more densely populated sections of Faras Bêt and Denkäkê.

The Christian hierarchy had its own quarters. The *abuna*, an Egyptian monk appointed by the Coptic Patriarch at Alexandria as spiritual head of the Ethiopian Church, lived with his retinue in one sector.⁴⁰ Another area, Eçhagê 792 Bêt, was reserved for the Amhara monk who served as administrative head of the Church. Each church compound, moreover, was the focus of another residential section, where its clergy kept their modest huts. The Eçhagê Bêt and 798 the church compounds were considered sanctuaries and thus, in theory at least, were secure from plunderers. The Gondarë and wealthy people from the country used these areas as a safety vault for their valuables.

The ethnic groups which settled in Gondar had their respective ghettos. 175* The Muslims lived in the lower part of the city adjacent to the river Qiha, 633 which was convenient for their ritual ablutions. They were looked down on 361 by the Christians, and meat slaughtered by one group would not be touched 563 by the other. Poncet observed that when an Abyssinian met a Muslim in the 86 576

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streets, "he salutes him with his left hand, which is a mark of contempt."⁴¹

The Falasha, potters and metalsmiths of Judaic faith, were similarly segregated, and plied their arts and crafts in another quarter.

Though many different peoples came together in Gondar, and though it was a meeting-point of trade routes from the Sudan, the Red Sea ports, and the African interior, Gondar's cultural role was not primarily that of a melting pot of diverse traditions. It served rather as an agent for the quickened development of the Amhara's own culture.⁴² And thus it became a focus of national pride. The countryfolk looked on Gondar not as a hotbed of alien custom and immorality, as they often regard Addis Ababa today, but as the most perfect and advanced embodiment of their own traditional values.

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The Gondarē himself, as denizen of this second Jerusalem, was prouder still. A snobbish pride became one of the conspicuous marks of Gondarē character. This pride is manifest in many ways. On the one hand, it appears as incorrigible vanity. Hence arise the many caricatures of the Gondarē—as one who goes hungry in order to purchase fine clothes in which to strut about, or as one who satisfied his hunger at home before going out in order not to appear needy at his host's table. (Perhaps the most famous of the stories about the Gondarē is the one about the man who spent the night naked and shivering because, for form's sake, he hung up his only garment as a curtain about himself.) On the other hand, Gondarē pride appears as the immense dignity with which the Gondarē carries himself, his sensitivity to the nuances of personal relations, his choice use of the Amharic language, his noble bearing. If there is a polarity in Gondarē life comparable to the Manzē polarity of bravery versus aggression, it is pride versus vanity.

Gondar's role as political and cultural capital of the nation for so long produced two other distinctive aspects of the Gondarē ethos. One is the love of *shumat*, or political appointments. Despite the unfortunate denouement of the Gondar monarchy, Gondar's importance as chief administrative center for such a long period had a deep influence on the ways of the people. "Give the Gondarē any office whatsoever," it is said, "and no matter what the salary, he will be happy."

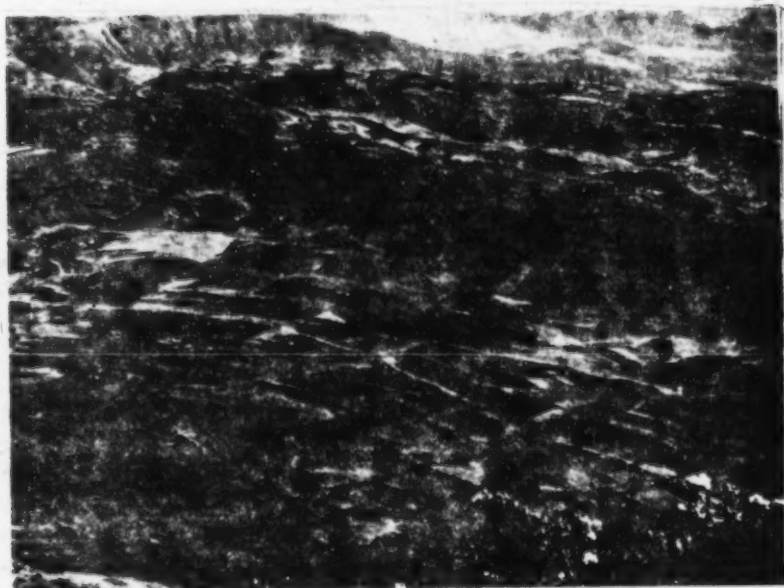
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The Gondarē's love of *shumat* is expressed in two phenomena which contrast strikingly with their Manzē counterparts. In the naming of children, the Gondarē prefers names which express an ambition for political honors, such as *Maḳonnen*, meaning "nobleman," and *Negusē* ("my king"). Furthermore, [691] litigation in Gondar is characteristically concerned with disputes regarding *mādariyā*, land which has been given as an award for service to the government, as well as with disputes over *rist*.

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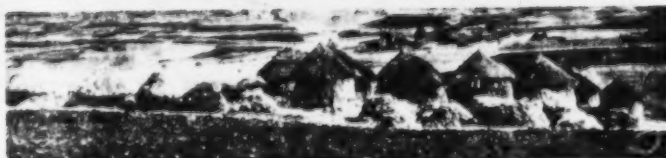
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The other prominent aspect of Gondar's ethos relates to its position as the center of Ethiopia's Christian literati. The fact that it was the ecclesiastical capital of the country is not the most important consideration here. Of course,



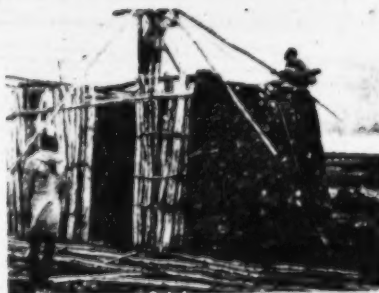
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FIG. 6.—The Amhara countryside



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FIG. 7.—An Amhara homestead, Manz



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FIG. 8.—Building a house

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75 / *The World of the Amhara Peasant*

holy ark stands in the center of the church, an area restricted to priests and deacons and consecrated to the performance of the Mass. The second circle is reserved for those few who are privileged to partake of Communion— young, children and rare adults who have been married according to the church laws. The third circle is where ordinary people stand during the Mass and where the clergy sing and dance on special holidays. The church itself stands in a compound ringed by an outer wall, representing still another grade of ritual impurity. Those who have eaten before the Mass or have had sexual relations the night before are not supposed to enter the church at all, and must stand outside the outer wall during services.

This spatial pattern is likewise found in the arrangement of people out of doors. The outstanding instance of this is the traditional organization of the military camp of a *negus* or *räs*. In the center of the camp is the large, round tent of the chief, together with tents for the holy ark, high-ranking visitors, and supplies. Around this central area the commanding officers are stationed. They in turn are encircled by the tents of the cavalry. Beyond this ring, finally, is an outer circle composed of the huts of the common soldiery.

Spontaneous arrangements along this line appear during festivals. The person or persons who sing or dance are placed in the center and the spectators form a circle around them. During religious celebrations this circle consists of priests and *dabtarā*. At some distance the laymen watch from an outer circle. Here, as in the home, church, and military camp, concentric circles serve to segregate people according to their place in some hierarchical order.

Society and Human Nature

The Amhara's conceptualization of the human order lends itself as a whole to being articulated in terms of patterns of concentricity and hierarchy. The sociological component of the Amhara peasant world view consists, on the one hand, of a series of notions centered on the individual self and his progressively wider groupings; and, on the other hand, of a series of distinctions which rank persons in accord with criteria of superior and inferior qualities.

The Amhara peasant tends to have a pronounced awareness of his personal ego. The boundaries of his person and property appear firmly marked in his mind and are more important to him than the boundaries of any of his social egos. He likes to live on his own land, at a good distance from neighbors. If he lives in a homestead with other relatives, he prefers to dwell in his own separate building. The Amhara's proverbial comment on the subject is that "Home and the grave are by oneself." He is sensitive about his personal belongings, quick to defend his rights, reluctant to accept suggestions, and inflammable over insults. His conception of the admirable

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- *121 *Landsmann*) regularly evokes considerable sentiment. There is also a
181 strong sense of solidarity based on the use of Amharic—both among the
186 Amhara as a whole vis-à-vis other Ethiopians who either do not know
619 Amharic or speak it imperfectly, and among regional dialect groups. The
people of Gojjam and of the Gondar area are particularly chauvinistic with
regard to the quality of their Amharic.
- *121 This attachment to symbols of religion, territory, and language is impor-
181 tant in providing a basis for identity and morale. Yet these attachments are
621 of relatively little import in shaping a self-transcending orientation in the day-
to-day activities of the Amhara; for the crucial context of these activities is the
local community, and in the civic sphere the Amhara manifest very little
solidarity. Indeed, it may be said that the Amhara have virtually no sense of
“community” at all, for the concept can scarcely be rendered in idiomatic
Amharic.
- *121 The absence of community sentiment among the Amhara is implied by
181 their ecology. Not only did the Amhara fail to produce extensive and durable
• 361 urban centers (with the limited exception of Gondar) but their country is
621 even barren of that frequent cornerstone of peasant life, the village. The
Amhara have distributed themselves thinly, scattering in groups of fours and
fives up and down their mountains and plateaus. Larger aggregations are
found on the estates of noblemen, but these constitute expanded private house-
holds rather than civic communities. The Amhara justify this dispersion of
their population on the grounds that wide spaces are needed for the grazing
of livestock and that a man needs to live on the land he farms. But herding
and farming have been carried out well enough elsewhere by people living
together in villages, and it is quite probable that this ecological pattern is due
as much as anything else to the Amhara’s preference for not having too much
association with those outside his immediate kin group. In his own words, the
Amhara prefers the kind of neighbor who “does not push the boundaries”
(*wassan aynakām*), and believes, as noted earlier, that *bēt-ennā māqbar*
labetchāw naw (“home and the grave are by oneself”). It is a preference
manifest in such solitary living arrangements as that of divorced women who
sometimes live by themselves in the country, eking out a living by spinning
cotton or brewing spirits, and in the age-old predilection of Abyssinian monks
for anchoritism.
- *121 The moral counterpart of this ecological pattern is a preoccupation with
181 private interests that leaves little room for the consideration of communal
156 needs. According to the Amhara vocabulary of motives, social action is moti-
157 vated first and foremost by the pursuit of *fiqem*, or narrowly conceived self-
interest.⁹ This matter-of-fact acceptance of egoistic motivation among the
Amhara appears during what is a common occurrence: the shameless sub-
version of occasions which are set up to consider communal problems and to

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131 their combined ranks the political elite of Ethiopia has
779 been historically recruited. Third among the highland
peoples are the Agaw. It appears likely that they are
the descendants of the original Hamitic population of
this region, and only during the last century have most
Begemder Agaw been converted from their indigenous re-
ligious beliefs to membership in the Coptic Church.
Within Begemder, they constitute a majority of the in-
habitants of three non-contiguous areas. Fourth among
highlanders are the rural Muslims, indigenous people who
have been converted to Islam over the last five centuries.

[241] While the rural Amhara, Tigre, and Agaw are exclusively
[463] farmers, these Muslims divide their energies between farm-
[286] ing and working as artisans, mainly weavers of the toga
[443] cloth; Muslim women are prominent among the traders of
[562] the weekly markets held throughout the province. Least
numerous of the highland people are the Falasha, Abyssin-
[423] ian Jews following a Mosaic creed. A despised and humil-
[326] iated people, the Falasha farm only rented fields
[286] (timene), and work as smiths as well as weavers; Falasha
[162] women are potters. Although the Falasha are localized
in several regions, they nowhere constitute a majority
• [361] of an area's residents. Like the Abyssinian Muslims,
they reside either in hamlets of their own, apart from
Amhara, or in peripheral homesteads of otherwise Christ-
ian hamlets. These distributions are summarized in Map2.

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Parish and Hamlet. The highland zones can be divided along three complementary social dimensions---political, ecclesiastical, and economic. Politically, the province is divided into awraja (sub-province), warada (district of a sub-province), and meketel warada (sub-district). The meketel warada consists of fifteen to thirty parishes (deber). The parish, in turn, is composed of three to ten hamlets (mender), each consisting of ten to fifty households (bet). Most households consist of husband, wife, unmarried sons, and pre-pubescent daughters¹¹; a minority of households consist of aged spouses only, or of widowed individuals living by themselves. Characteristically, the households of a hamlet are dispersed, so that any one is perhaps 100 to 300 meters from its closest neighbors.

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While officials of the provincial and sub-provincial governments are generally out-landers appointed by the central government, administrators of the warada and meketel warada are usually members of the local gen-try. Within the parish, civil administration is in the hands of the ceka Yum, a petty administrator who imple-

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¹¹Since it is common for a girl to marry at 11 or 12, but to delay the virilocal move until age 15 or 16, the natal household may include a married daughter.

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motives of piety and supplication, to the saints' eponymic churches. Within the environs of Gondar, for example, there are forty-two churches, and perhaps half are of sufficient antiquity and fame to mark them for special visits on the saints' days. Each of the market towns contains at least one famous church. The larger towns are, moreover, the seats of their sub-provinces, and are the objects of visits by peasants on "government" (mongist) business. Most frequently, this means litigation involving the disposition of land rights.

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Two Rural Hamlets. Tikurmidir and Lemmariet are

neighboring hamlets, situated on fertile dega lands. Together they occupy the southwest quadrant of Kidus Yowhannis parish (hamlet and parish names are pseudonyms), a three hour walk from the awraja seat, Dabat town, in the Woggera region. Of the two, Tikurmidir is larger:

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	Tikurmidir	Lemmariet
Total population	151	95
Total households	36	24

In both hamlets, a majority of households are headed by

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[162]

risteñas. These households are distributed among the hamlets' ambilineages as follows:

	Tikurmidir	Lemmariet
Ambilineage I	18	10
Ambilineage II	6	1

12: Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

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	Tikurmidir	Lemmariét
• 361		
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613		
[162]		
Ambilineage III	4	
Ambilineage IV	3	
Ambilineage V		5
Ambilineage VI		3
Ambilineage VII		2
Total <u>risteñas</u> households	<u>31</u>	<u>21</u>

[423] In each of the hamlets, there are two households be-
 * [192] longing to Amhara tenant farmers (timeneña), individuals
 unable to claim membership in any local ambilineage.
 These tenants, who provide their own seed and draught
 animals, return a quarter of their crops to the risteñas
 [779] whose fields they use. There in Tikurmidir two addition-
 [433] al timeneña households, whose members are Muslims. These
 [286] households are headed by brothers who supplement their
 * [192] agricultural activities by weaving the yama (toga) for
 local Christians.

* 793 Primary rights to a third of a parish's fields are
 361 believed to reside with the parish church. Ideally, the
 423 use of such fields, known as yikeys mariet ("priest's
 795 land"), is given to local priests in return for parti-
 * [192] cipating in the Masses of the parish church. In prac-
 [613] tice, rist-holding ambilineages become associated with
 specific tracts of yikeys mariet by providing such
 priests over generations. Occasionally, ambilineage

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members are unable to retain their claims to these church lands (which are intimately linked to the acquisition of leadership positions and prestige within the parish) by providing priests from their own ranks. Consequently, substitutes from outside the parish must be obtained. Such is the case with ambilineage I today. According to current allocation of yikeys mariet in Tikurmidir and Lemmariet, ambilineages I and V are each expected to provide three priests for the Mass. Ambilineage V currently provides its three from three ambilineage households of Lemmariet. Ambilineage I, however, currently provides only one risteña priest (a resident of Tikurmidir). Thus, members of ambilineage I using these fields have been obliged to invite two non-risteña priests to take up residence on a portion of these lands, in return for participation in the Mass.

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Finally, these hamlets contain three female servants, unrelated to other residents of the parish. In Tikurmidir, there is a single Amhara attached to a household of ambilineage I; in Lemmariet there is a "bariya" in a household of ambilineage I, and another in a household of ambilineage V.

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Herbalist Medicine in Tikurmidir and Lemmariet.

The herbalist therapies of these two hamlets are described in Table 7. With the use of this information, the following paragraphs will indicate that the professional